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ABSTRACT

Information from this study is intended to provide schools of education with high school students' perceptions of the teaching profession. Questionnaires submitted to students were designed to: (1) identify high school seniors' perceptions of the profession; (2) determine whether differences exist between groups categorized on the basis of sex and race; and (3) identify factors which discriminate between students who are considering teaching and those who are not. Only twelve percent of the responding students indicated they would consider teaching as a career. Discouraging factors included low salaries, discipline problems, and working conditions. It was viewed, however, as a good profession for women. Black and female students perceived many factors in teaching in a significantly more positive manner when comparisons were made between groups categorized on the basis of sex and race. A copy of the questionnaire is appended to this report. (JD)

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THE TEACHING PROFESSION: HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR PERCEPTIONS

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A Summary Paper

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INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALE

The declining number of new teachers may be met with elation by educators in some locations in the country. However, some areas of the Southeast are experiencing critical teacher availability deficits. For example, in May 1981, Georgia Department of Education officials projected a potential 4,000 to 5,000 teacher shortage in the state for the 1980-81 academic year. An intense recruiting effort during the summer and an extensive use of provisionally certified personnel significantly reduced this overwhelming shortage. The present shortages in Georgia, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Louisiana have evolved from: teacher drop-out, retirement, an increase in specialized programs, and a drastic decrease in the number of teachers prepared by many Southern institutions.

Recruitment of individuals for the teaching profession is essential. Information from this study should provide educators with an understanding of the backgrounds and perceptions of the students that will be their targets for recruitment.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of the study is three-fold: (1) to identify Southeastern high school senior perceptions of the teaching profession; (2) to determine whether significant differences exist between groups categorized on the basis of sex and race; and (3) to identify factors which significantly discriminate between students who are considering teaching and those who are not.

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The study consisted of 2478 subjects, representing ten different Southeastern states. Contact persons in colleges and schools of education were asked to identify schools that would be potential participants in the study. Appropriate channels

were utilized, central office contact followed by contact with the principal, to determine a school's willingness to participate.

Subjects responded to a data gathering instrument devised by the authors to ascertain high school senior perceptions of the teaching profession. Organization of the instrument includes three areas of questions. One area relates to background information. Subjects respond to requests related to sex, race, future plans, and identification of persons, if any, with whom they had discussed teaching as a future job opportunity. A second area provides respondents, who are considering teaching as a career goal, the opportunity to provide additional information. These subjects identify the age at which they became interested in teaching and the gradel level and subject areas in which they would like to teach. The third area elicits responses to determine perceptions of the teaching profession. In this area, there are 22 questions that require subjects to select a yes or no response. One question is multiple-choice.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Responses of students were analyzed to determine: frequency statistics for background information and perceptions, differences between groups categorized on the basis of sex and race, and factors which discriminate between students considering teaching and those who are not. Frequency tabulations, one-way analyses of variance, and the Wilks Lambda discriminant analysis statistic were utilized in this effort.

Discriminant analysis indicates that the instrument predicted with 81.63% accuracy whether or not students were considering teaching as a future career opportunity. Only 12% of the students actually responded that they would consider teaching.

Salary was perceived by the majority of students (82.9%) as a discouraging factor. Discipline problems and working conditions were also perceived as discouraging. However, most of the students viewed teaching as a "good profession to enter," especially for women. Black and female students perceived many factors in teaching in a significantly more positive manner when comparisons were made between groups categorized on the basis of sex and race.

The limited number of high school seniors who are considering teaching as potential employment made that decision at an earlier age than teacher educators may have thought. Findings of the study indicated that 40% of students interested in teaching made that decision prior to age 15. Additionally, 40% became interested at age 15 or 16. Only 20% made this decision as a 17 or 18 year old.

The major finding of the study was that the factor that best discriminates whether students will consider teaching is simply whether or not other individuals have discussed this possibility with them. Revealing to educators is that a majority of students (74.3%) had never had anyone talk with them about the teaching profession. Parents and teachers were the individuals that more than likely discussed teaching with the remaining minority. Only 1% of the students reported that the school counselor had presented the teaching profession as a possibility for consideration to them.

The frequency percentages for the items are indicated on Tables 1 and 2. Results of the analyses of variance statistics comparing groups categorized on the basis of sex and race are found on Tables 3 and 4. Summary results for the discriminant analysis are presented on Tables, 5, 6, and 7.

TABLE 1

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: FREQUENCY STATISTICS

ITEMS	RESPONSES		PERCENTAGES
SEX	MALE		48.1
	FEMALE		51.9
RACE	BLACK		15.9
	WHITE		83.8
	OTHER		.3
AFTER HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION I PLAN TO:	BEGIN FULL TIME WORK		21.1
	ENTER COLLEGE		62.4
	ENTER VOCATIONAL SCHOOL		6.1
	JOIN ARMED SERVICES		4.6
	OTHER		5.5
HAS ANYONE EVER TALKED TO YOU ABOUT BECOMING A TEACHER?	YES		25.7
	NO		74.3
		% OF TOTAL	% OF YES
IF SOMEONE HAS TALKED WITH YOU ABOUT BECOMING A TEACHER, PLEASE INDICATE THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PERSON(S).	PARENT	6.4	24.5
	TEACHER	5.6	21.5
	COUNSELOR	1.0	3.9
	FRIENDS	2.8	10.7
	OTHERS	1.6	6.1
	COMBINATIONS	8.7	33.3
ARE YOU CONSIDERING TEACHING AS A FUTURE JOB OPPORTUNITY?	YES		12
	NO		88
IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING TEACHING, AT WHAT AGE DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN TEACHING?	PRIOR TO AGE 15		40
	AGE 15 - 16		40
	AGE 17 - 18		20
IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING TEACHING, WHAT GRADE DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD LIKE TO TEACH?	PRIMARY (K-3)		45
	MIDDLE (4-8)		20
	SECONDARY (9-12)		35

TABLE 2

PERCEPTIONS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION
AS A FUTURE CAREER OPPORTUNITY:
FREQUENCY STATISTICS

ITEMS	RESPONSES AND PERCENTAGES	
WOULD THESE INDIVIDUALS ENCOURAGE YOU?		
PARENTS	YES - 66.7	NO - 33.3
TEACHERS	YES - 70.3	NO - 29.7
PRINCIPAL	YES - 56.7	NO - 43.3
COUNSELOR	YES - 68.2	NO - 31.8
FRIENDS	YES - 38.0	NO - 62.0
WOULD THESE FACTORS ENCOURAGE YOU?		
SALARY	YES - 23.7	NO - 76.3
FRINGE BENEFITS	YES - 54.7	NO - 45.3
WORKING CONDITIONS	YES - 52.2	NO - 47.8
CONTRIBUTIONS TO HUMANITY	YES - 68.9	NO - 31.2
SOCIETAL STATUS	YES - 35.3	NO - 64.7
JOB SECURITY	YES - 23.7	NO - 76.3
JOB AVAILABILITY	YES - 42.7	NO - 57.3
OTHERS	YES - 6.3	NO - 93.7
WOULD THESE FACTORS DISCOURAGE YOU?		
SALARY	YES - 82.9	NO - 17.1
WORKING CONDITIONS	YES - 54.6	NO - 45.4
DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS	YES - 75.8	NO- 24.2
SOCIETAL STATUS	YES - 39.4	NO - 60.6
JOB AVAILABILITY	YES - 60.3	NO - 39.7
JOB SECURITY	YES - 50.1	NO - 49.9
OTHERS	YES - 9.4	NO - 90.6

TABLE 3

VARIABLES SHOWING SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GROUPS CATEGORIZED ON THE BASIS OF SEX

VARIABLE	F. PROB.	* DIRECTION OF SIGNIFICANCE
FUTUKE PLANS	.0292	MALES WERE MORE LIKELY TO RESPOND THAT THEY WOULD ENTER VOC. SCHOOL OR JOIN ARMED SERVICES.
SOMEONE TALKED	.0000	F > M
WHO TALKED	.0000	F > M
CONSIDERING TEACHING	.0000	F > M
PARENTS WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0004	F > M
TEACHERS WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0000	F > M
COUNSELOR WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0007	F > M
FRIENDS WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0000	F > M
FRINGE BENEFITS WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0024	F > M
SOCIETAL STATUS WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0338	F > M
JOB AVAILABILITY WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0402	M > F
OTHER FACTORS WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0014	M > F
DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS WOULD DISCOURAGE	.0284	F > M
OTHER FACTORS WOULD DISCOURAGE	.0049	M > F
GOOD PROFESSION FOR MEN	.0000	F > M

* THE SYMBOL "> " (GREATER THAN) IS UTILIZED TO SEPARATE GROUPS, WITH THOSE RESPONDING "YES" A SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER NUMBER OF TIMES ON THE LEFT.

F = FEMALE
M = MALE

TABLE 4

VARIABLES SHOWING SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN GROUPS CATEGORIZED ON THE
BASIS OF RACE

VARIABLE	F PROB.	* DIRECTION OF SIGNIFICANCE
SOMEONE TALKED	.0500	B > W
PARENTS WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0229	B > W
PRINCIPAL WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0012	B > W
SALARY WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0000	B > W
CONTRIBUTION TO HUMANITY WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0000	W > B
SOCIAL STATUS WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0000	B > W
JOB SECURITY WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0000	B > W
JOB AVAILABILITY WOULD ENCOURAGE	.0000	B > W
SALARY WOULD DISCOURAGE	.0000	W > B
JOB AVAILABILITY WOULD DISCOURAGE	.0000	W > B
JOB SECURITY WOULD DISCOURAGE	.0133	W > B

* THE SYMBOL " > " (GREATER THAN) IS UTILIZED TO SEPARATE GROUPS, WITH THOSE RESPONDING "YES" A SIGNIFICANTLY GREATER NUMBER OF TIMES ON THE LEFT.

B = BLACK
W = WHITE

TABLE 5

VARIABLES WHICH INDEPENDENTLY DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE CONSIDERING TEACHING AND THOSE WHO ARE NOT

SIGNIFICANT VARIABLES	LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
SEX	.0000
SOMEONE TALKED	0
WHO TALKED	0
PERCEPTIONS OF POSSIBLE ENCOURAGEMENT FROM INDIVIDUALS	
PARENTS	.0000
PRINCIPAL	.0375
FRIENDS	.0000
PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT ENCOURAGE OR DISCOURAGE	
FRINGE BENEFITS	.0102
WORKING CONDITIONS	.0128
CONTRIBUTION TO HUMANITY	.0003
JOB SECURITY	.0002
SOCIETAL STATUS	.0306
OTHERS	.0154
PERCEPTIONS OF HOW MUCH TEACHERS ENJOY THEIR WORK	.0000
PERCEPTIONS OF WHETHER TEACHING IS A GOOD PROFESSION:	
FOR WOMEN TO ENTER	.0000
FOR MEN TO ENTER	.0000

TABLE 5

DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS
SUMMARY TABLE

STEP	ACTION ENTERED	ACTION REMOVED	VARS IN	WILKS LAMBDA	SIG.
1	WHO TALKED		1	.858010	0
2	x22 (GOOD FOR WOMEN)		2	.844518	.0000
3	x5 (FRIENDS WOULD ENCOURAGE)		3	.837777	.0000
4	SOMEONE TALKED		4	.831685	.0000
5	x6 (TEACHERS ENJOY WORK)		5		
6	RACE		6	.826249	.0000
7	x12 (JOB SECURITY WOULD ENCOURAGE)		7	.823669	.0000
8	x11 (SOCIETAL STATUS WOULD ENCOURAGE)		8	.821384	.0000
9	x1 (PARENTS WOULD ENCOURAGE)		9	.819327	.0000
10	x4 (COUNSELOR WOULD ENCOURAGE)		10	.817867	.0000
11	x10 (CONTRIBUTION TO HUMANITY WOULD ENCOURAGE)		11	.816320	.0000
12	SEX		12	.815069	.0000
13	x18 (SOCIETAL STATUS WOULD DISCOURAGE)		13	.814009	.0000
14	x14 (OTHERS WOULD ENCOURAGE)		14	.813251	.0000
15	x23 (GOOD FOR MEN)		15	.812575	.0000
16	x2 (TEACHERS WOULD ENCOURAGE)		16	.811853	.0000
17	x3 (PRINCIPAL WOULD ENCOURAGE)		17	.811237	.0000
18	x19 (JOB AVAILABILITY WOULD DISCOURAGE)		18	.810679	.0000
19	x13 (JOB AVAILABILITY WOULD ENCOURAGE)		19	.809436	.0000

TABLE 7

DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS
CLASSIFICATION RESULTS

GROUPS	PREDICTED GROUP MEMBERSHIP TEACHING	NON-TEACHING
PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS	66.2%	33.8%
NON-PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS	16.3%	83.7%

PERCENT OF GROUPED CASES CORRECTLY CLASSIFIED - 81.63

The Teaching Profession:
Perceptions of High School Seniors

The following items are designed to obtain your perceptions of the teaching profession as a future job opportunity. Please circle the appropriate answers.

1. If you showed an interest in becoming a teacher, do you feel that the individuals listed below would encourage you?

(a)	parents	yes	no
(b)	teachers	yes	no
(c)	principal	yes	no
(d)	school counselor	yes	no
(e)	friends	yes	no

2. How much do you think teachers enjoy their work? (circle one)

all of the time
most of the time
some of the time
very little
not at all

3. Do you think the following aspects of teaching would encourage students to consider the teaching profession as a future job opportunity?

(a)	salary	yes	no
(b)	fringe benefits (retirement, vacation)	yes	no
(c)	working conditions	yes	no
(d)	contribution to humanity	yes	no
(e)	societal status	yes	no
(f)	job security	yes	no
(g)	job availability	yes	no
(h)	others_____ (please specify)	yes	no

4. Do you think the following aspects of teaching would discourage students from considering the teaching profession as a future job opportunity?

(a)	salary	yes	no
(b)	working conditions	yes	no
(c)	discipline problems	yes	no
(d)	social status	yes	no
(e)	job availability	yes	no
(f)	job security	yes	no
(g)	others_____ (please specify)	yes	no

5. Do you think teaching is a good profession

(a)	for women to enter?	yes	no
(b)	for men to enter?	yes	no

Please respond to the background information on the attached page.

Background Information

Circle the appropriate response for each item.

1. Sex: (a) Male (b) Female

2. Race: (a) Black (b) White (c) Other_____(Specify)

3. After High School graduation I plan to:

   (a) begin full time work

   (b) enter college

   (c) enter vocational school

   (d) join the armed services

   (e) other_____(specify)

4. Has anyone ever talked to you about becoming a teacher? Yes No

   If you circled yes, please indicate the relationship of the person(s) to you by circling the appropriate roles.

   parent friend

   teacher others_____
   (please specify)

   school counselor

5. Are you considering teaching as a future job opportunity? Yes No

   If you circled yes, please respond to the information requested below:

---

a. At what age did you become interested in teaching?_____

b. What grade do you think you would like to teach?_____

   What subjects?_____

c. If you would like additional information concerning teaching and teacher preparation, please give us your name and address:

   Name_____

   Street Address_____

   City, State, Zip_____